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TRAINING THE YOUNGEST GIRLS FOR WAGE EARNING

SYSTEMS TO BE FOUND AT PRESENT IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

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AT the present time, even though the work has been but lately begun, excellent examples of trade and vocational education for girls can be seen in both Europe and America. The European schools have long since passed the experimental stage and are usually a regular part of the system of public instruction, supported by governmental grants. On the other hand with us this class of training, being new and as yet in a more or less tentative stage, is chiefly in private hands. The foreign schools give us valuable suggestions, but the direct copy of their work, successful as it is according to the special needs of paternal governments, is not altogether fitted to a growing democracy like the United States. National desires and needs plus the requirements of the community where the schools are placed must influence the trades selected, the course of study and the methods of instruction in every good school. European systems are adapted to the national and municipal conditions of their varied peoples.

The majority of the professional schools for girls abroad are planned for the middle classes who are in fairly comfortable circumstances and can therefore pay fees and take several years for training. It is only incidentally that such institutions help the poorer working people. With us such instruction must be arranged for all classes. It is no unusual thing to hear those who have visited the professional schools abroad recommend the incorporation of such instruction into our educational system to help wage earners, forgetting that four or five-year trade courses, often with fees and competitive examinations for entrance, would be impossible for the daughters of the poor working

classes in our large industrial cities. Our problem deals with the poorest as well as the well-to-do, the foreigner and the native-born.

The meeting of the need of the lowest-class worker is perhaps more pressing with us, for in European countries children are apt to continue in the occupation of their parents, and labor on the farm or at small home trades or in little shops or markets, as their ancestors did before them. Lines of class demarcation greatly effect schemes of education in Europe, and such discrimination is accepted as necessary. With us on the other hand the workers of the lowest rank are always struggling to get ahead, hence our schools must allow for such upward movement. Moreover, the wages of workers in this group are at the lowest figure, as they are forced by poverty to accept any wage they can get. The schools, then, must also study the industrial condition of the group and improve it.

Different types of education have been organized to train the youthful workers who rush into positions the moment the law will allow them to obtain working papers. The girls of this type cannot take advantage of the *Ecoles Professionnelles* of France, Italy and Belgium, of the *Frauenarbeitsschulen* of Germany or of the vocational and technical high schools of America. They have not the requisite education for entrance in the majority of cases and they have at best but a few months or a year to spare for training. The schools which have been planned to aid them in self-support may be grouped roughly under the following heads:

1. Elementary Vocational Schools.—Industrial training of a general character in the last two or three grades of the elementary school, which sends the pupils into life with a good practical working foundation.

2. Continuation Schools.—Weekday or Sunday classes for workers under sixteen years of age, which will help them to obtain a further practical education while they are working for self-support.

3. Apprenticeship, Trade or Factory Schools.—Special trade training after the compulsory school age is passed or in the year following graduation from the elementary school, consisting of

shop practice which can be taken by those who can still give a little additional time to training and who can thus be prepared to enter some good trade or business position closed to the untrained. Girls can thus enter industry with the ability to make a living wage and with the hope of rising.

I. The elementary vocational school aims to help the poorest and youngest workers. As large numbers of girls in the great industrial cities of the world are forced, on account of the poverty of their families, to go to work as soon as they reach the age when the law allows them to take out working papers, this class of school aims to provide them with an education immediately available for use. The *Volksschulen* of Germany and the *Ecoles Primaires* of France and Belgium have tried to meet this situation by making handwork compulsory through each year of the school. The American public school has done this intermittently, but now that the country is awake to the needs of the working class, severe criticism is heard everywhere of the general trend of our common schools in helping the few who go on to higher education, but doing little for the many who do not. Investigation of the mental and manual condition of the great body of our young wage earners shows them unable to use their hands well or to utilize their academic education. The unskilled trades which alone are open to them do not require much use of their academic education which after a year or two is almost forgotten. If they manage to get into the better positions they are unable to hold them, for their education has not been of the kind to help them practically in trade. The trouble is not that the education is not good, but that it is not put to practical use by these young wage earners after they leave school.

Workers of the lowest grade in the large industrial cities of the United States have to face a difficult economic problem. The father can seldom make enough to support his family well, so the mother is compelled to assist. The children as they reach fourteen, usually before they have completed the elementary school, are forced to take any position they can get, whether healthful or not, whether offering opportunities or not. These fourteen-year-old workers are too young to

go to school at night to continue their education, for their strength is sapped by day work; they are too poor to go to a trade school, for their wage cannot be given up by their families and the public school can offer them no more than free education (except in rare instances). Competitive examinations to obtain a supporting scholarship are generally beyond their reach, for they are handicapped by foreign birth, underfeeding and lack of mental acumen. As a consequence they are easily distanced in scholarship by the children of the middle-class workers who need the help less. The girls have to meet the most severe strain of the labor market; they must have money; they underbid their fellows and overcrowd the unskilled trades. The life itself is harder on them than on the boys, both physically and spiritually. These little girls are crowding into the labor market in appalling numbers. Their parents naturally want them to be self-supporting, but know not how to help them. They are often willing to sacrifice themselves and keep the children in school until graduation, but the girls resent the present course of study as useless and get out of school as quickly as possible. On the other hand both parents and children appreciate a curriculum which offers directly available, practical training, and they will do much to obtain it. Hence lately some of the wiser educators have offered industrial courses in the last three grades of the school to induce children to remain longer and to give them a good foundation adaptable to trade or to home use.

In 1907 the public schools of Boston began experiments in various parts of the city looking toward special vocational courses in the sixth and seventh grades. The North Bennett Street school was chosen as one center for industrial work. A special building was set aside and furnished with class rooms for sewing, textiles and design and was also equipped with kitchen, dining room and bedroom, thus giving excellent opportunity for applied lessons in housekeeping and housefurnishing. Fifty girls from the Hancock school in the neighborhood are chosen and are divided into two groups. They alternate with each other in taking academic and industrial work, both morning and afternoon being utilized. They have six and a half hours of

academic work to three and a half of industrial. The course of study recognizes woman's relation to wage earning and to the home, and the culture and technical work are well interrelated. The movement, already showing success, aims to vitalize the regular school studies, to gain the interest of the girls so they will remain in school until graduation, to enable each girl to determine intelligently her life work and finally to direct her into higher grades of occupation.

New York City has also started similar work in the special classes organized to help pupils who while old enough to have their working papers have not met the educational requirements. Other cities have also begun experiments of a like character, handwork and connected academic study being features in all these schools. Some of our private schools also are making special investigation of the varied conditions and needs of the people and are trying to adapt their work to these needs, so that when boys and girls are forced to leave school they will have a usable education. Examples of such wise adaptation to conditions can be found in the Ethical Culture school and the Speyer school in New York City.

Perhaps the most significant work of this character at the present time is in Germany. *Stadtschulrat* Dr. Georg Kerschensteiner of Munich, realizing that both boys and girls were dropping out of the *Volksschulen* at the first opportunity possible, planned a new and excellent course of practical study elective in the eighth school year. The work was begun in 1896. Many children remained in school to try it and so valuable did the experiment prove that the course was later made compulsory. Dr. Kerschensteiner felt that girls will eventually fall into one of the following classes: housewives who take charge of affairs at home, domestic servants, workers in commercial or industrial positions, governesses, teachers or companions. After the seventh grade each girl chooses the field for which she would like to prepare, and in the eighth grade the foundation is laid for future success in her chosen occupation. The eighth-grade work is not professional but is broadly vocational. The pupils take the entire course, after which they are given a "leaving certificate" and can go to work; but formal

education is not yet over, for they must attend a continuation school for one year at hours allowed by their employers. Each one is thus prepared for future usefulness, and German life and industries reap the benefit.

The curriculum of the eighth-grade class is as follows:

Religion (always given in German schools) 2 hours weekly; household management and cookery, 8 hours; needlework, such as is needed in the household, 4 hours; German, in business correspondence, moral and ethical training, reading lessons, including domestic subjects, hygiene and German family life, 6 hours.

Arithmetic, management of domestic accounts, elements of commercial arithmetic, cost of living and the maintenance of the home, 4 hours.

Gymnastics and singing are also included in the curriculum.

As a part of the training in household management there is instruction in clothing and housing which covers:

a. Study of the body.—Its functions and its care, breathing, circulation of the blood and properties of heat radiation and evaporation, and the preservation and regulation of heat through clothing.

b. The textile materials, raw and manufactured.—Their physical properties and use as clothing, hygienic rules, taste and suitability in dress, wet and dry cleansing of clothing, the bed and bedding.

c. Housing.—The properties of building materials, the position of the house, heating, lighting, ventilation and disinfection, hygienic rules in the household, and furnishing.

II. The continuation school helps those girls who are forced by poverty to go to work without sufficient education by giving them opportunity for further training in the evening, on Sunday or on weekday afternoons. Such schools are well developed in Germany. Compulsory day continuation schools (*Fortbildungsschulen*) are found in Bavaria, with Baden, Württemberg and Prussia inclined to follow closely. They aim not only to continue the intellectual and moral culture of the students, but to prepare them for definite trades and occupations. The work for girls is less developed along commercial and industrial lines

than that for boys, but in domestic features is very comprehensive. There are usually three divisions of work for girls—commercial, for clerks and secretaries; domestic, for training in home occupations; and industrial, for arts such as dressmaking, millinery, lingerie, art needlework, machine embroidery, designing, bookbinding and photography. Germany considers that such schools prevent the waste of life which occurs when workers are uneducated and unprepared. As these schools have employers of labor on their boards of management the work is practical and is kept up to the requirements of industry.

In Bavaria, as has been said before, when a girl legally finishes her compulsory education she can go to work, but she is not therefore released from school. She is offered her choice of the following courses:

a. The eighth-grade class for one year, 30 hours weekly, and the Sunday school or weekly continuation class for a year following.

b. A school which meets on Sunday for three years, 3½ hours a week.

c. A commercial or domestic continuation school for three years, 5 to 10 hours weekly.

d. A division of the three years of required education between these various kinds of schools.

Thus the Bavarian girl has a fine opportunity to prepare for her future and to be ready for her lifework no matter what it is. The eighth-grade work is duplicated in the continuation class, so that if the family finances are so straitened that the daughter cannot attend the eighth-grade class for a year, she can still obtain this valuable training in afternoon and Sunday classes. The government requirement that employers must allow their young employes to attend day school during each week is a wise one, for these girls are too young to profit by night instruction. The training has been found to give a good economic return, for the workrooms gradually obtain skilled help and the worker is enabled to obtain a good position and become a valuable citizen.

An excellent *Fortbildungsschule* is the *Frauenarbeitsschule*, carried on at *Oberangerstrasse 17*, Munich. The building, once

a palace, is large, simple and adequate; the work is excellent and well organized. The handwork is carried to a high pitch of technical skill and the domestic instruction offers opportunities for specialists.

One of the earliest continuation schools for girls was the Victoria *Fortbildungsschule* in Berlin, opened in 1878. The majority of the pupils are from the families of artisans and small tradesmen, and not from those of day laborers and factory hands. Opportunities for training on all sides of woman's life are offered, the work is excellently done and a beautiful spirit of service pervades the school. Each girl's characteristics are carefully studied and she is given the training best adapted to her. From such teaching it is not wonderful that there is an appearance of thrift and happiness among the German people.

Continuation classes in America up to the present have not been exactly like the German ones. Night classes under public instruction have offered academic, commercial and domestic courses of all kinds; but the aim has been general helpfulness rather than direct aid to young wage earners by supplementing with special training their defective preparation for business positions. The difference between the two governments is a factor in the situation. The German government can make such courses compulsory between definite ages and can require manufacturers to give up their young employes during certain hours of the day; but with us the wish of the voters of a city must be considered. The majority of our employers assert that competition is too close for any one firm to try the experiment unless all do the same, and to compel all means tedious legislation. It is of interest to know, however, that this interrelation between factory and school has already been tried with success for boys in Massachusetts and Ohio, and that the latter state will make the same experiment for girls. The following plan is in use in Cincinnati: The manufacturers agree to send boys from among their employes to attend school and at the same time to pay them a regular wage. The board of education provides the teachers, and the work in general is technical with as close application as possible to the special factory in which the boys are employed. A period each day is devoted

to general shop questions, shop practise, economic and civic questions. Practise in spelling, writing and reading in connection with the story of industries is given. It is expected that it will take four years for the average boy to complete the course, a period which corresponds to the four years of apprenticeship demanded by the unions. Reports are sent to employers of the attendance of their employes. As children under sixteen can work but eight hours a day, *i. e.*, 48 hours a week, the employer gives up four hours of this for school training. The boy therefore is in the shop for 44 hours and at school four hours per week. A bill has been introduced into the Ohio legislature recommending that this kind of instruction be made compulsory. The fact that a girl's business life is of uncertain duration makes more difficult a similar plan for her education, as employers are less inclined to allow her to take instruction in business hours. Many of the Cincinnati workrooms, however, have agreed to try the experiment.

A form of continuation work which promises well in trades employing boys is the school within the factory. When this education aims to develop the students broadly and not alone for specific use in one enterprise, it is the best kind of training. Beginnings of such instruction for girls have appeared in the training forewomen are obliged to give green girls, and more orderly courses are already developing. The social secretary now employed in so many large stores to look after the women workers has in some cases added the instruction of new employes to her duties. Courses in salesmanship, elementary studies, technical and domestic training, are at present being given as a part of the work of certain department stores. Filene's in Boston and the Wanamaker stores in Philadelphia and New York are doing work of this character for their employes.

III. The short-time trade or factory school offers all-day courses from a few months to a year in length to those girls who even though they must go to work early can arrange to give a short period to preparation for some industrial pursuit. The compulsory school years are over and the work papers obtained, but the student may or may not have finished the

elementary school work. In a city like New York with so large a foreign element half the students, at least, will not have completed the eight grades of school when they go to work. In Boston a larger proportion have been graduated. The trade-school problem has been partially met in a few of the cities of the United States. New York organized trade instruction for girls in 1902 and Boston followed in 1904. Milwaukee, Cleveland, Rochester and Albany have begun or are about to begin similar work, but as yet their schools have not been established long enough to show definite results.

In Europe this class of school, reproducing actual trade conditions and fitted for the poorest girls, is rare. In Belgium there are a few which are called apprenticeship schools. The one in Maldaghem is extremely interesting. The town is small and very mediæval. The school is housed in a new, simple building. The entrance is on the side, and a narrow long hallway, in which the students put their sabots two by two on both sides, stretches the length of the building. A steep little staircase leads to the upper floor where the business offices and workrooms are to be found. Orders are carried out as in any factory, the work being fine handwork, the operation of Corneli and single embroidery machines, beading, and crocheting on net and mousseline. Robe garments of embroidered net, scarfs, curtains and lace veils of fine character are produced, some of which come to the American market. The students are paid nothing while learning, but after their training is finished can continue to work in the school and receive a regular wage. The same town has another school for teaching the making of fine varieties of Brussels lace, the product of which is for the regular market. The building is an old type of peasant home with stone floors. These Belgian apprenticeship schools are under government inspection.

The type of apprenticeship school begun in the United States is quite different. The Manhattan Trade School of New York was the pioneer; the Boston Trade School was organized later on similar lines. A careful study of trade conditions in each city preceded the organization of instruction. Continual close touch with actual conditions is held by both schools to be nec-

essary in order to keep up to business requirements. They have thus fitted well into the business life of their particular cities. The schools differ from each other in the trades they offer just as the two cities differ. They both believe that trade conditions must be exactly reproduced in instruction; consequently they are organized as small factories. To aid the trade work and to develop a high-class worker, art and academic work adapted to the specific needs of each of the trades represented in the schools are given. Wholesale and custom work are taken in all departments. Systems of business shops headed by trade workers who can teach as well as conduct workrooms give the students real business organization under which to work. The results in both schools show that such practical instruction enables the workers to enter better positions, to gain higher wages and to continue to rise to more influential positions. Crude, thoughtless girls have been developed into thoughtful, reliable workers, and capable girls have been given the opportunity of rapid rise to positions suited to them.

In both schools stress is laid upon health work. By careful physical examinations, specific treatment, talks on hygiene, lessons on foods, and experience in simple lunchroom cookery, the health of students is brought to a higher level and they know how to keep it there. This of itself makes better workers, able to stand the strain of business life. Established health will also react favorably on their homes and families if they marry.

Training for domestic service is not usually appreciated or desired by the American girl of the large cities, for the industrial trades offer her better opportunities. Even Germany finds difficulty in attracting to her schools for training servants the class for whom the schools were intended. An excellently planned school for this purpose was opened some time since in Berne, Switzerland. The servant's course, six months in residence, includes the following work: cooking; care of kitchen, care of the cellar and keeping stores; gardening, including planting, cultivating, and gathering vegetables; laundry work; mending; and care of rooms. Rooms with board are rented in the school building to give practical experience to the student.